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AF/PA; EUR/WE (DEBORAH MENNUTI)/P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA
(BERBENA); INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE
HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR AND PASS USTR/PA
(ANN LUZZATO); USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA; ROME/PA;
BRUSSELS/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAQ - LIBERATION OF GIULIANA
SGRENA LEBANON - SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL IRAN EURO-AMERICAN
RELATIONS
PARIS - MONDAY, MARCH 07, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAQ - LIBERATION OF GIULIANA SGRENA
LEBANON - SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL
IRAN
EURO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE MEDIA ON MONDAY, AS IT DID OVER THE WEEKEND, DEVOTES WIDE
COVERAGE AND EDITORIAL COMMENTARY TO THE LIBERATION OF ITALIAN
JOURNALIST GIULIANA SGRENA AND TO THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING
AN ATTACK ON HER AIRPORT-BOUND CONVOY, WHICH LEFT ONE ITALIAN
SECRET SERVICE AGENT DEAD. LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION, WHOSE

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JOURNALIST FLORENCE AUBENAS IS HELD HOSTAGE IN IRAQ, HEADLINES
"IN IRAQ, AN INVESTIGATION INTO A BLUNDER" AND EDITORIALIST
PATRICK SABATIER TITLES HIS COLUMN: "INEXCUSABLE." WHILE
SABATIER ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE SITUATION IN IRAQ REMAINS
"COMPLEX," HE NEVERTHELESS POINTS A FINGER AT THE "GIS WHO
FIRED WITHOUT WARNING AND WITHOUT REASON: THIS IS
INEXCUSABLE." RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES TWO
CONFLICTING REPORTS ABOUT THE INCIDENT, ONE FROM THEIR ROME
CORRESPONDENT, ONE FROM A NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT. (SEE PART
C)

SYRIA AND ITS PROGRESSIVE WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON ARE TODAY'S
SECOND MAJOR STORY. FOR CATHOLIC LA CROIX, "SYRIA IS BARTERING
ITS WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON," WHILE FOR LE FIGARO, "SYRIA IS
LETTING GO" BECAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE. BUT IN HIS
COMMENTARY PIERRE ROUSSELIN WARNS AGAINST "REJOICING
PREMATURELY: HEZBOLLAH CAN STILL STAND IN THE WAY OF LEBANON'S
SOVEREIGNTY." (SEE PART C)

IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE, SYLVIE KAUFFMAN PENS A FRONT-PAGE
ANALYSIS ON EURO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, "AFTER HURRICANE BUSH."
SHE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT "A COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS HAS LED TO A
RECONCILIATION. BUT THE RECONCILIATION IS ON TERMS IMPOSED BY
THE U.S." (SEE PART C)

THE SITUATION WITH TEHERAN OVER ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM IS THE
SUBJECT OF AN EDITORIAL COMMENTARY IN LA CROIX. JEAN-
CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN WARNS THAT "TEHERAN'S COMPLEX POWER
STRUCTURES SHOULD LEAD EVERYONE TO BE VERY CAUTIOUS." (SEE
PART C)

ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, THE CAMPAIGN FOR AND AGAINST THE
EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION IS ON, NOW THAT THE DATE FOR THE
REFERENDUM, MAY 29, HAS BEEN SET.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAQ - LIBERATION OF GIULIANA SGRENA

"INEXCUSABLE"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/07): "THE
TRAGEDY WHICH SURROUNDED SGRENA'S LIBERATION CAN SERVE AS A
METAPHOR TO THE HORRENDOUS COMPLEXITY OF THE SITUATION IN
IRAQ. AND TO THE WAY AMERICAN TROOPS ARE PARADOXICALLY
AGGRAVATING THE TERRORIST SITUATION WHICH THEY ARE FIGHTING.
THE GIS WHO FIRED WITHOUT REASON OR WARNING COMMITTED AN
INEXCUSABLE ERROR. THERE IS AT THIS TIME NO FACTUAL CLUE TO
VERIFY GIULIANA SGRENA'S TALE OF A DELIBERATE ATTACK ON THE
CONVOY. BUT THE U.S. ARMY IS ON THE BENCH OF THE ACCUSED. THE
U.S. HAS LIED TOO OFTEN IN THE PAST FOR ANYONE TO ACCEPT ITS
VERSION OF THE FACTS WITHOUT AN INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION.
THIS BLUNDER IS ALL THE MORE SERIOUS BECAUSE IT IS ONE MORE
EXAMPLE OF THE VIOLENCE IRAQI CIVILIANS MUST ENDURE, COMING
FROM SOLDIERS WHO LACK PROPER TRAINING AND ARE TOO TRIGGER-
HAPPY. THEY ARE FOMENTING ANTI-AMERICAN FEELINGS IN THE IRAQI
POPULATION, IN ITALY AND ELSEWHERE."

"SILENCE AND EMBARRASSMENT IN WASHINGTON"

GUILLEMETTE FAURE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (03/07): "THE U.S. ARMY IS KEEPING SILENT ABOUT THE BLUNDER THAT WOUNDED GIULIANA SGRENA AND KILLED AN ITALIAN SECRET SERVICE AGENT. IN BAGHDAD, AP REQUESTED TO VIEW THE VEHICLE WHICH SUSTAINED THE ATTACK: THE U.S. ARMY RESPONDED IT DID NOT KNOW WHERE IT WAS."

LEBANON - SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL

"THE HEZBOLLAH THREAT"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (03/07): "SYRIA HAS NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON. BEIRUT IS THE STAGE WHERE THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD IS BEING PLAYED. THIS IS A GOOD THING, BECAUSE WHY SHOULD THE ARAB WORLD STAY OUT OF THE DEMOCRATIC WAVE GRIPPING THE WESTERN WORLD? AS IN KIEV, IN BEIRUT FEAR IS CHANGING SIDES. THIS IS SO TRUE THAT FROM RIYADH TO CAIRO MOST ARAB CAPITALS HAVE ADVISED DAMASCUS TO GIVE IN. STILL, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO REJOICE PREMATURELY. THE GAME BEING PLAYED OUT IN LEBANON IS VERY COMPLEX AND CANNOT BE DISASSOCIATED FROM ITS REGIONAL CONTEXT. BACHAR EL-ASSAD WAS CONVINCED THAT THE U.S. WOULD BE MIRED IN IRAQ AND NEVER IMAGINED THAT FRANCE WOULD SIDE WITH WASHINGTON TO DEMAND SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON. SYRIA IS NOW IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO GIVE IN TO GROWING PRESSURE, BUT IT HAS NOT UTTERED ITS FINAL WORD. HEZBOLLAH, WHICH IS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN TEHERAN AND DAMASCUS AS WELL AS THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S KEY INSTRUMENT IN THE REGION, CAN STILL STAND IN THE WAY OF LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY."

"BUSH REJECTS HALF-MEASURES"

JEAN-LOUIS TURLIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (03/07): "POLITICALLY SPEAKING, HEZBOLLAH, WHICH THE U.S. HAS PLACED ON THE LIST OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS, MAY BECOME A POINT OF CONTENTION BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND THE EUROPEANS, WHO HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT THE ORGANIZATION, WHICH HAS BEEN CONDEMNED FOR ITS TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, ALSO HAS ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT."

IRAN

"IRANIAN THREATS"

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (03/07): "TEHERAN IS RAISING ITS VOICE AGAINST THE EUROPEANS OVER ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM. ON SATURDAY, THE VERY-WELL REGARDED HASSAN ROHANI WARNED ABOUT USING OIL AS REPRISAL IF THE UNSC WERE TO GET A HOLD OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR ISSUE. HE ALSO ADDED THAT 'THE REGION WOULD BE WEAKENED AND THAT THE U.S. WOULD BE THE FIRST TO SUFFER.' THIS IS IRAN'S WAY OF REMINDING EVERYONE THAT IRAN'S CONTROL INTO IRAQ GOES FAR AND THAT IT CONSIDERS AMERICAN TROOPS IN IRAQ TO BE 'AN OCCUPATION FORCE.' RAFSANJANI HAS HIMSELF ARGUED THAT EUROPE AND THE U.S. WOULD BE BEGGING FOR TROUBLE IF THEY ASKED IRAN TO STOP ITS PLUTONIUM ENRICHMENT PROGRAM. THE EUROPEANS RECENTLY ASKED PRESIDENT BUSH FOR HELP IN THEIR APPROACH WITH TEHERAN. ALONE, THE EUROPEANS CANNOT DO MUCH, OTHER THAN GAIN SOME TIME. BUT ALSO WASTE TIME BECAUSE THE IRANIANS WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY THEIR DOUBLE GAME UNTIL THE ELECTIONS ON JUNE 17. TEHERAN'S COMPLEX POWER STRUCTURES SHOULD INCITE EVERYONE TO BE VERY CAUTIOUS."

EURO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

"AFTER HURRICANE BUSH"

SYLVIE KAUFFMANN IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE (03/07): "IT IS OFFICIAL: WE ARE FRIENDS AGAIN. CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S CHARM OFFENSIVE WAS A SUCCESS. AS WAS PRESIDENT BUSH'S INTELLIGENTLY PLANNED AND ORCHESTRATED EUROPEAN TRIP. THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION GAVE IT ALL IT'S WORTH AND THE SUCCESS OF THIS MAJOR DIPLOMATIC OPERATION IS INDISPUTABLE. WHILE IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT ALL IS FORGOTTEN., THERE IS TODAY A COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS AND A CONJUNCTION OF POSITIVE FACTORS WHICH ARE PUSHING FOR RECONCILIATION. BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THIS RECONCILIATION IS BEING IMPLEMENTED ON TERMS DICTATED BY THE WORLD'S ONLY SUPERPOWER, WITH A EUROPEAN PARTNER WHICH, ALTHOUGH MORE UNITED, IS SOMEWHAT DISCONCERTED AND LACKING IN IMAGINATION. IT IS ONE THING TO SHOW ONE'S FRIENDSHIP TOWARDS PUTIN AND BUTEFLIKA, BUT NO MATTER WHAT ONE THINKS ABOUT PRESIDENT BUSH, IS IT NOT A FACT THAT THE FRENCH HAVE MORE IN COMMON WITH THE AMERICANS THAN WITH THE RUSSIANS OR THE ALGERIANS?" LEACH